

# The Heck With Tech

## Trying to Put Aside the Computer for a Pen and the S.U.V. for a Bike

By **CHRISTOPHER J. COHAN**

**I** START my day by winding my watch that has 12 large numbers and a sweep second hand. I fill my fountain pen with India ink, which I use to write letters. I check my date book and review my penciled-in schedule.

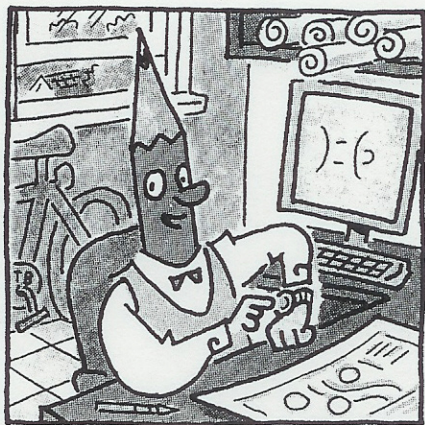
I do not have a cellphone or a beeper. I find call waiting obnoxious and rude. The bothersome little beep interrupts your existing phone call to let you know someone else wants to reach you. You are compelled to tell the person you are speaking with to hold on, implying that they are less important and must wait. Then I find myself so totally distracted by the little beeping that in my sporting attempt at multitasking while on the phone, I forget what I am talking about or lose one of the callers. What ever happened to getting a busy signal and calling back when the line is free?

I do not like receiving garbled cellphone calls that drift in and out of reception. I wonder about the people who call me while they are in transit, or waiting in line for a movie. Are they just filling dead air and time? Am I a distraction to their time in traffic, on line or just a prop to their persona, which must always be in motion, appear busy and seem important?

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When there is a power failure we have to reprogram appliances from the microwave to the fax machine, which does everything but make espresso. This is so frightening that homeowners think about backup generators.

I realize that digital doohickeys have evolved into necessities for



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many. I don't fault the people who use them. I am not immune.

I admit that I do have a computer and all that it uncomfortably represents. It silently screams at me: "Hey, look at me, I have a better memory than you do and my handwriting is neater. Not to mention, I am far more organized and my grammar is better, too." It is a barely tolerable relationship that I fear I am stuck with.

But as a landscape architect, I still

draft with a sharpened pencil on vellum, a cloth drafting paper. I enjoy the tactile connection. Writing begins with a legal pad or two, a pen and a strong cup of coffee. I write my many drafts longhand to distill them down to the final few words that are printed.

And I enjoy hand-writing letters. Picking the right stock of paper, using a good pen and choosing interesting stamps are all part of the dwindling art of letter writing. Receiving a letter amid a sea of bills and junk mail is like discovering a treasure that you cannot wait to open.

Some of my work is local enough that I can get to it on my bicycle. There is no radio, no switches, dials or seat levers to busy yourself perpetually with while driving, just the pleasure of the wind on your face and the meditative rhythm of pedaling along.

The bicycle gets me everywhere I need to go in Rye as quickly as any supercharged S.U.V. I never have a parking problem.

Toward the end of some days, I take a break from the drafting table, stretch, straighten my back and bike to the end of the long fishing pier at Playland Amusement Park. The pier juts out into Long Island Sound where I am surrounded by salt air, lapping waves and the warmth of the sunset — and no cellphone addicts. This peaceful place allows me to be alone with my thoughts — as insignificant as they may be.